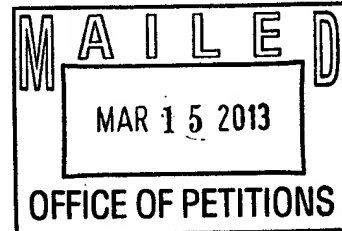




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CARLOS FLOREZ  
5440 NW 161 STREET  
MIAMI GARDENS, FL 33014



In re Patent of  
CARLOS FLOREZ  
Patent No. 6,253,480  
Issue Date: 07/03/2001  
Application No. 09/276107  
Filing or 371(c) Date: 03/25/1999  
Title of Invention:  
PERSONALIZED SAFETY DEVICE FOR A  
HAND HELD WEAPON

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR § 1.378(b), to reinstate the above-identified patent, filed January 23, 2013.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any further petition to reinstate the above-identified patent must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under [insert applicable code section]." This is **not** final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

**Background**

The patent issued July 3, 2001. Patentee could have paid the seven and one half (7½) year maintenance fee between July 3, 2008 and January 3, 2009, without a surcharge, or within the six (6) month grace period between January 4, 2009 and July 3, 2009. Patentee failed to do so; accordingly, the patent became expired on July 4, 2009.

**The present petition**

Petitioner files the present petition and provides, in relevant part, that since the economy started to decline a few years ago, his personal economy went with it. At all times Petitioner says he had to choose between taking care of the urgent things like keeping the company open, or the important ones such as paying for his house or the maintenance of the patent.

**Applicable Law, Rules and MPEP**

37 CFR 1.378(b) provides that a patent may be reinstated at any time following expiration of the patent for failure to timely pay a maintenance fee. A petition to accept late payment of a maintenance fee, where the delay was unavoidable, must include:

- (A) the required maintenance fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(e)-(g);
- (B) the surcharge set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(i)(1); and
- (C) a showing that the delay was unavoidable since reasonable care was taken to ensure that the maintenance fee would be paid timely and that the petition was filed promptly after the patentee was notified of, or otherwise became aware of, the expiration of the patent.

The required showing must enumerate the steps taken to ensure timely payment of the maintenance fee, the date and the manner in which patentee became aware of the expiration of the patent, and the steps taken to file the petition promptly. Furthermore, an adequate showing requires a statement by all persons with direct knowledge of the cause of the delay, setting forth the facts as they know them. Copies of all documentary evidence referred to in a statement should be furnished as exhibits to the statement. (Emphasis supplied).

As language in 35 U.S.C. § 41(c)(1) is identical to that in 35 U.S.C. § 133 (i.e., “unavoidable” delay), a late maintenance fee for the unavoidable delay standard is considered under the same standard for reviving an abandoned application under 35 U.S.C. § 133. *See Ray v. Lehman*, 55 F.3d 606, 608-09, 34 USPQ2d 1786, 1787 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (quoting *In re Patent No. 4,409,763*, 7 USPQ2d 1798, 1800 (Comm’r Pat. 1988), *aff’d sub nom. Rydeen v. Quigg*, 748 F. Supp. 900, 16 USPQ2d 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), *aff’d*, 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir. 1991) (table), *cert. denied*, 502 U.S. 1075 (1992)). *See* MPEP § 711.03(c) for a general discussion of the “unavoidable” delay standard.

As 35 U.S.C. § 41(c) requires the payment of fees at specified intervals to maintain a patent in force, rather than some response to a specific action by the Office under 35 U.S.C. § 133, a reasonably prudent person in the exercise of due care and diligence would have taken steps to ensure the timely payment of such maintenance fees. *Ray*, 55 F.3d at 609, 34 USPQ2d at 1788. That is, an adequate showing that the delay in payment of the maintenance fee at issue was “unavoidable” within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(c) and 37 CFR 1.378(b)(3) requires a showing of the steps taken to ensure the timely payment of the maintenance fees for this patent. *Id.* Thus, where the record fails to disclose that the patentee took reasonable steps, or discloses that the patentee took no steps, to ensure timely payment of the maintenance fee, 35 U.S.C. 41(c) and 37 CFR 1.378(b)(3) preclude acceptance of the delayed payment of the maintenance fee under 37 CFR 1.378(b).

In view of the requirement to enumerate the steps taken to ensure timely payment of the maintenance fee, the patentee’s lack of knowledge of the need to pay the maintenance fee and the failure to receive the Maintenance Fee Reminder do not constitute unavoidable delay. *See Patent No. 4,409,763*, *supra*. *See also* Final Rule entitled “Final Rules for Patent Maintenance Fees,” published in the Federal Register at 49 Fed. Reg. 34716, 34722-23 (August 31, 1984), and republished in the Official Gazette at 1046 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 28, 34 (September 25, 1984). Under the statutes and rules, the Office has no duty to notify patentees of the requirement to pay maintenance fees or to notify patentees when the maintenance fees are

due. It is solely the responsibility of the patentee to assure that the maintenance fee is timely paid to prevent expiration of the patent. The lack of knowledge of the requirement to pay a maintenance fee and the failure to receive the Maintenance Fee Reminder will not shift the burden of monitoring the time for paying a maintenance fee from the patentee to the Office. Thus, evidence that despite reasonable care on behalf of the patentee and/or the patentee's agents, and reasonable steps to ensure timely payment, the maintenance fee was unavoidably not paid, could be submitted in support of an argument that the delay in payment was unavoidable.

Moreover, the Patent and Trademark Office must rely on the actions or inactions of duly authorized and voluntarily chosen representatives of the applicant, and applicant is bound by the consequences of those actions or inactions. Link v. Wabash, 370 U.S. 626, 633-34 (1962); Huston v. Ladner, 973 F.2d 1564, 1567, 23 USPQ2d 1910, 1913 (Fed. Cir. 1992); see also Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1132 (D.N. Ind. 1987). Specifically, petitioner's delay caused by the actions or inactions of his voluntarily chosen representative does not constitute unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 USC 133 or 37 CFR 1.137(a). Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (D. Ind. 1987); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (Comm'r Pat. 1891). In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912)(quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913).

However, Petitioner should note that a breakdown of communication between petitioner and their client is not considered to be grounds for granting a petition for late payment of the maintenance fee under the unavoidable standard. See, Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608-09, 34 USPQ2d 1786, 1787 (Fed. Cir. 1995).

### Opinion

The standard requires Petitioner to demonstrate that he acted as a prudent and careful person in relation to his most important business. Petitioner must prove that the delay was unavoidable. A petition will not be granted if petitioner provides insufficient evidence to "show" that the delay was unavoidable.

Petitioner files the present petition and provides, in relevant part, that since the economy started to decline a few years ago, his personal economy went with it. At all times Petitioner says he had to choose between taking care of the urgent things like keeping the company open, or the important ones such as paying for his house or the maintenance of the patent. In this regard petitioner made a choice to keep his company open and intentionally decided to not pay the maintenance fee.

In addition to this, an adequate showing that the delay in payment of the maintenance fee at issue was "unavoidable" within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(c) and 37 CFR 1.378(b)(3) requires a showing of the steps taken to ensure the timely payment of the maintenance fees for this patent. Here, petitioner has failed to provide a showing of the steps taken to ensure the timely payment of the maintenance fees for this patent, and instead provides that he did not take any steps to ensure the timely payment of the maintenance fees for this patent because petitioner chose not to pay the maintenance fee.

Where the record fails to disclose that the patentee took reasonable steps, or discloses that the patentee took no steps, to ensure timely payment of the maintenance fee, 35 U.S.C. 41(c) and 37 CFR 1.378(b)(3) preclude acceptance of the delayed payment of the maintenance fee under 37 CFR 1.378(b).

### **Conclusion**

Petitioner's arguments have been considered; however, Petitioner has failed to demonstrate that the failure to pay the maintenance fee was unavoidable. The petition is dismissed.

### **Petitioner's current options**

#### **I. Petitioner may file a request for reconsideration.**

If reconsideration of this decision is desired, a petition for reconsideration must be filed within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. The petition for reconsideration should be entitled "Petition for Reconsideration under 37 CFR 1.378(e)." Any petition for reconsideration of this decision must be accompanied by a non-refundable petition fee of \$400 as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(h).

After a decision on the petition for reconsideration, no further reconsideration or review of the matter will be undertaken by the Director. Therefore, it is extremely important that petitioner supply **any** and **all** relevant information and documentation with his request for reconsideration. The Director's decision will be based solely on the administrative record in existence. Petitioner should remember that it is not enough that the delay was unavoidable; petitioner must **prove** that the delay was unavoidable. A petition will not be granted if petitioner provides insufficient evidence to 'show' that the delay was unavoidable. Therefore, if a request for reconsideration is filed, it must establish that the entire delay in the submission of the maintenance fee was unavoidable.

#### **II. Petitioner may request a refund of the maintenance fee and surcharge which accompanied the petition.**

Petitioner may request a refund of the maintenance fee and surcharge by writing to the Office of Finance, Refund Section, Commissioner for Patents, Washington, DC, 20231. A copy of this decision should accompany petitioner's request.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail:                      Mail Stop PETITIONS  
                                    Director for Patents  
                                    PO Box 1450  
                                    Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By FAX:                      (571) 273-8300  
                                    Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand:                     Customer Service Window  
                                    Randolph Building

401 Dulany Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Telephone inquiries concerning *this matter* should be directed to attorney Derek Woods at (571) 272-3232. All other inquiries should be directed to the appropriate Office<sup>1</sup>.

/DLW/

Derek L. Woods  
Attorney  
Office of Petitions

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<sup>1</sup> Petitioner will note that all practice before the Office should be in writing, and the action of the Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. See, 37 CFR 1.2. As such, Petitioner is reminded that no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's further action(s).